FY2009 CYFAR Sustainable Community Projects
Application Instructions

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Part I: SCP Program Description

The mission of the CYFAR Program is to marshal resources of the Land-Grant and Cooperative Extension Systems so they can develop and deliver educational programs that equip limited-resource families and youth who are at risk for not meeting basic human needs with the skills they need to lead positive, productive, contributing lives. While children and youth living in low income families and high risk environments face many challenges, CYFAR programs focus on positive outcomes, rather than only on preventing negative outcomes.
CYFAR programs expect positive outcomes for all age categories:

- **Early Childhood:** Children will have their basic physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs met. Babies will be born healthy.
- **School Age (K-8):** School age youth will demonstrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior necessary for fulfilling contributing lives.
- **Teens:** Teens will demonstrate knowledge, skills, attitudes, and behavior necessary for fulfilling contributing lives.
- **Parents/Families:** Parents will take primary responsibility for meeting their children's physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs and provide moral guidance and direction. Families will promote positive, productive, and contributing lives for all family members.

Since 1991, Youth At Risk (YAR), State Strengthening (STST), New Communities (NCP) projects, and most recently, Sustainable Community Projects (SCP), have served as the CSREES mechanism for funding community-based projects and expanding statewide capacity for supporting and sustaining programming for at risk youth and families. These programs have been funded in all states and three territories and annually reach nearly 30,000 youth and parents in high risk communities.

CYFAR Projects have two strategic objectives: (1) to support community educational programs for at-risk children, youth, and families based on locally identified needs, soundly grounded in research, and which lead to the accomplishment of one of four CYFAR National Outcomes; and (2) to integrate CYFAR programming into ongoing Extension programs for children, youth, and families insuring that at-risk, low income children, youth, and families continue to be part of Extension /4-H programs and have access to resources and educational opportunities.

The CYFAR philosophy is the basis for Sustainable Community Projects. Collaboration is a central expectation across disciplines, program areas, and geographic lines as is a holistic approach that views the individual in the

context of the family and community.

For SCPs, applicants will select only one national outcome for all community sites and all community projects will be required to work with the same program model. Focusing on the same outcome and program model across sites will result in increased consistency in program planning, implementation, training, and evaluation. It will also expedite communication across sites and with the university to maximize resources for community programming. A uniform logic model will be provided for the purpose of program design, implementation, and evaluation.

Part II. One National Outcome

Critical issues and demographic trends impacting children and families in the state should be examined when making outcome and audience decisions. Consider migrant workers; new immigrant children and families; families coping with military deployments, separations, and reunions; youth facing issues of drugs, violence, crime, teen pregnancies, STDs, AIDS, obesity, isolation, poor school achievement; etc. For SCPs, institutions will select only one of the four National CYFAR Outcomes for all community sites -- ***Early Childhood, School Age (K-8), Teen, or Parent/Family.*** It is the responsibility of the CYFAR project staff to create an inclusive process in the state for determining the single outcome. University, county and community program staff experienced in working with at-risk audiences should be involved in the decision on selecting the single outcome.

Part III. One Program Model

Guiding Principles

Once the CYFAR Outcome is selected, the appropriate CYFAR Guiding Principles should be considered as a single program model is selected for all community sites. Guiding Principles for Early Childhood, School Age, Teen, and Parent/Family are found on the CYFAR Web site. Selection of the program model and the relationship of the model to the Guiding Principles must be thoroughly explained in the application. Suggestions for descriptors, strategies for implementation and resources are also posted with the Guiding Principles for use in the development of the SCP. Whether an applicant elects to use an established program model or chooses to design its own programmatic approach, each principle for the selected outcome must be addressed in the SCP application. Programs have key and essential components which constitute the structure:

- Desired short and long term results
- Age range of high context participants
- Frequency and duration of contact with the program

- Group size and staffing plan
- Program and curriculum content (science technology, community service, drama, computer literacy, reading literacy, parent education, exercise/fitness, etc.)
- Standardized training and technical assistance plans for project staff

When one program model is selected, these components will be uniform across all CYFAR community sites.

High Context Participants

Research has shown that young people need positive relationships with caring adults, inclusive and safe environments, to be engaged in their own learning, to have opportunities for mastery, self-determination, and to see themselves as active participants in the future and to value and practice service for others. CYFAR programs are intended to provide long-term, increasingly challenging educational experiences designed to meet needs of youth to experience belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. High context programming refers to experiences in which young people and adults have close connections and challenging activities intended to continue for a significant period of time. Participants that receive the ongoing, intense interaction with the program are considered the high context participants and are the focus of the five-year plan. Other youth and adult audiences benefit from CYFAR programs and sometimes from the activities of high context participants. These are an important part of the community strengthening aspect of CYFAR and should be noted in the five-year plan and reported on in the Community Section of the Year-End Report.

Part IV: Integrated Program Components

From the beginning, the CYFAR program has focused on purposeful integration of three essential program components in all community-based projects. The Community Component captures the ecological approach of CYFAR projects, connecting the projects to existing networks, as well as insuring that the family and community remain strong contexts for program participants. The Technology Component recognizes the importance of the teaching and utilization of technology, including technology in program planning, implementation, and evaluation. The Sustainability Component needs to be part of initial program planning. Considering how the project might evolve, change, and ultimately become institutionalized needs to be addressed along with all central issues in program planning.

Community

Children, Youth, and Family programs are most effective in reaching long term and lasting impacts when they involve change in the larger ecological context of the program audience. For example, pairs of mentors and youth engaged in a mentoring project are grouped to do an ongoing community service project aimed at increasing community connections, or a parent education program is governed by a community collaboration seeking to lower child abuse rates. The community context should be integrated coherently into the overall program and serve to enhance outcomes of the primary program areas of early childhood, school age, teen or parent/family. The importance of Community is captured in the following CYFAR statement:

> The CYFAR Program is based on research on effective programs for at-risk youth and families and on the human ecological principle of working across the lifespan in the context of the family and community. To assure that critical needs of children and families are met, CYFAR supports comprehensive, intensive, community-based programs developed with active citizen participation in all phases. CYFAR promotes building resiliency and protective factors in youth, families and communities.
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> (See the CYFAR Program Overview on the CYFAR Web site.)

CYFAR recommends choosing at least one of the following three approaches for integrating this Community component:

- A Multi-Level Approach
- A Community Collaboration Approach
- A Systems Change Approach

These approaches represent a range of complexity and are intended to give the program developers several potential strategies to effect change in the program's community context. Program developers can adopt the best approach for enhancing their primary program outcomes.

A Multi-Level Approach targets program audiences beyond the program's primary target audience. These programs need to ensure that all program components are coherently integrated across the different program audiences. There are two primary types of multilevel programs. 1) Multi-generation programming Programs that work with multiple generations within a family. 2) Multi-system programming Programs that work within multiple aspects or levels of the system or organization. For example, an academic achievement program might target both students and teachers.

A Community Collaboration Approach would promote community programs working through a collaborative group. Programs that promote the most meaningful involvement through collaborative groups: 1) Seek to promote community ownership of the program; 2) Establish community buy-in before program implementation; 3) Advise, or operate when appropriate, the program through formalized community collaborations; 4) Include meaningful target population representation in key decision making groups (1/4 group members with at least 2 per group); and 5) Seek to build relationships and value all participants.

A collaborative group can have a range of structures and processes to meet different purposes. The most simple might just seek to increase community connections by creating relationships among the program audience and other groups in the community that are not usually associated for the purpose of relationship building, information sharing and community empowerment. This might involve intentionally creating connections among groups in the community, such as community-based organizations, and across different age groups, races, and SES levels. Mid level collaborations may seek to develop new program stakeholders and interest groups to provide program support and/or funding. At higher levels, programs would be governed by a community board that includes participants in real decision making roles and mobilizes and organizes the community to identify and meet its own needs. The ultimate goal of such a program is for the community to take full ownership of the project

A Systems Change Approach recognizes interacting social, economic, and environmental factors that influence the program audience and seeks opportunities to engage this audience in creating change. This approach works to facilitate change in the interactions of the target group and one of the broader systemic levels of the family, work/organization, or the community. This approach focuses on changing the way things work in a community to find and address root causes of community issues.

Systems change approaches may begin incrementally or involve rapid restructuring changes. Again, a range of program methods may result in system changes. Many times strategic planning work, public issues education, and leadership development create the possibility for community change that may then result in changes in the community's policies, infrastructure, resources, processes, targeted outcomes, cohesiveness, leadership structure, mobilization, etc.

Technology

Information and communication technologies (ICT) are permeating American society and lives. Parents, children, and grandparents communicate via email. They use the Web to find needed health and gardening information. They bank and shop online. Schools require term papers that are word-

processed, illustrated with graphics and tables and include URLs of references in footnotes. Online directories and maps help locate people and businesses. Entry level jobs now require technology skills as inventories of goods and services are maintained with technology. Technology literacy is an essential skill to perform basic activities of jobs and everyday lives.

However, adoption of innovations is a slow process. Special efforts to create low risk/high utility situations must be created. Integrating technology and the development of technology skills into programs which serve families and communities at risk is especially important, as typically they have fewer opportunities to learn. To this end, CYFAR programs at national, state and local levels set out to model the effective and innovative use of ICT. From early on, computers, email and Internet access and use for both CYFAR staff and CYFAR program participants was required. CYFERnet set out to provide examples, opportunities, training and access to information and applications that would attract and encourage technology use by both staff and participants.

The adoption issues for children and youth are even more critical. Academic standards for using technology as learning, research, collaboration, multimedia and communication tools have been established. Commonly referred to as "21st Century Learning Tools," it is in the integration of these tools with cognitive and interpersonal learning skills (such as problem-solving and teamwork) that youth are enabled to build the content knowledge and life skills needed to carry out the complex thinking processes needed to function effectively in 21st Century society. Research on human learning and the brain suggest that learning these good "habits of the mind" is easiest when children are young and opportunities to practice these skills are plentiful and available in a variety of settings. It is difficult for children and youth without early opportunities to ever catch up to their peers, which has repercussions for their educational and career success and functioning in the 21st century society.

An important benefit of technology integrated into the curriculum and programs for children, youth and adults is its capacity to create new opportunities to explore and solve problems. The experiential learning model used by 4-H is enhanced by technology when real-world problems, simulations, visualization and analytic tools, connections with experts and peers, opportunities to test and retest with immediate feedback, and other ICT interactive uses are incorporated into the program.

For CYFAR community-based programs, an explicit technology plan should be developed to ensure that information and communication technology is appropriately integrated throughout the program design. Programs should have adequate information and communication technology infrastructure (hardware, software, network connectivity/mini-labs, and technology expertise) to support program administration, professional staff

development, educational programming with clients, online collaboration, and electronic publishing of lessons learned and results. Specifically, CYFERnet recommends the following to successfully integrate the technology component in the program plan:

Professional Development: Maintaining and enhancing professional skills of community-based staff is critical. Information and communication technology help make these opportunities available to CYFAR sites that are distributed across the country. Opportunities are provided for staff through CYFERnet-sponsored web and audio conferences with national experts. Less structured opportunities for program staff include access to online journals and reports related to their work or discipline, employing effective search strategies, etc.

Program Planning, Evaluation, and Collaboration: Staff should become comfortable using collaboration tools to develop joint projects with other groups and model the use of technology in innovative ways. The results of their local work with nontraditional audiences (lesson plans, tip sheets, research briefs, publications) should be considered for sharing with others in the CYFAR program so that promising practices can be reviewed and, where appropriate, disseminated. Online collaboration tools such as Wikis, blogs, listservs, the CYFAR reporting database and CYFERnet Professionals database should be fully utilized to exchange information and enhance overall programs.

Educational Programming: The information technology component can be easily integrated into a variety of educational programs. One method involves a Tech Team approach to promote the use of technology in community service and leadership. Youth focus on demonstrating the effective use of technology, doing community leadership projects and training other leaders. Another method involves using online education and collaboration tools such as "goCyberCamp" which incorporates both technology and non-technology based activities. A third method could involve helping adults learn basic technology skills such as job search and resume preparation. Whatever local approach is taken, there should be an integration of online communication, online citizenship, and health and safety. For adults, the emphasis can be on living in the online society including the use of technology and the Internet for communication and information access. Many programs have found success in teaching basic technology literacy skills to promote client ability to be more employable.

For specific ideas on how to integrate technologies throughout your organization and programs, see "Technology Utilization Planning for CYFAR Sustainable Communities Projects" on CYFERnet.

Sustainability

Sustaining programs initiated in communities is an obligation of program professionals. Sustainability is the power or the capacity of programs to continuously respond to identified community issues. A sustained program maintains a focus consistent with its original goals and objectives, including the individuals, families, and communities it was originally intended to serve. Programs ebb and flow and wax and wane regarding the breadth and depth of their programming. Some contract and others expand while yet others truly maintain the original program activities. Some programs have become aligned with or have become part of other organizations and established institutions while others have maintained their independence. Certain programs have kept and offered the same set of prevention and intervention activities for many years, whereas others have introduced different activities that are still focused on their general goals and objectives. The key element of sustainability is retaining the goal of supporting at risk youth and families by providing continued benefits, regardless of the particular activities that are delivered. It is more important to sustain benefits to youth and families than to sustain program activities per se.

To most effectively sustain programs for children, youth, and families, an intentional effort must be made early in the program planning process. The development of a sustainability plan helps accomplish this goal. Development of a sustainability plan should consider those factors that research has demonstrated to be important for program sustainability:

Leadership Competence: Activities that contribute to high-quality programs are the responsibility of leaders and include clearly developing and articulating a program's vision and objectives; performing regular needs assessments; ongoing program planning and adaptation; program evaluation; securing funding; fiscal management; supporting and supervising staff; and providing staff training.

Effective Collaboration: Involves identifying relevant stakeholders who actively support program goals and who have clearly identified roles and responsibilities. Collaborative efforts build a broad base of support in the community and of key stakeholders for program implementation, success, and sustainability.

Understanding the Community: Entails having knowledge of community needs and resources; having respect for community members, and involving key community members in programs. Particular considerations include: socioeconomic and political considerations; community participation in programs; honoring community values and cultural relevance; cultivating key community leader support; and utilizing indigenous staff.

Demonstrating Program Results: Evaluating program process and outcomes using acceptable research methods and informing stakeholders of the results of those evaluations is critical. Evaluation must assess the intervention and subsequent program modifications focusing on measurable program results. Evaluation findings can then be used to leverage current successes for establishing future funding.

Strategic Funding: Includes having plans and resources in place to support current and prospective program requirements. Intentional planning for continued funding includes an analysis of short term and long term funding needs, developing a range of financing options, and recognizing that sustainability is enhanced when there is diversity in funding streams.

Staff Involvement and Integration: Inclusion of committed, qualified staff in program design, implementation, evaluation and decision making develops a culture that values broad-based participation in working toward program sustainability and success. Supporting program goals occurs more readily when staff is an important component in the organization and makes the organization their own.

Program Responsivity: The ability of a project to adapt programming to meet changes in community needs is critical. Although programs may maintain their overall program goals, activities may need change to address evolving issues and contexts. An important consideration in programs is the ability of the program to be modified to continually meet changing community needs and resources.

Part V. Selecting Community Sites

After the Outcome and the Program Model for the program are determined, university staff should set up an inclusive process to select two or three SCP sites based on the following criteria:

(a) At least 20 percent of the population in targeted communities must live in households with incomes below the poverty level.

(b) A minimum of 50 percent of participants at each site must meet one or more of the following characteristics: family qualifies for a public assistance program; family income falls below the poverty threshold; family income is less than 75 percent of the State or county median income; a parent did not complete high school; youth/family on record with community, juvenile justice and law enforcement, or social service agencies for things such as foster care, child abuse or child neglect, substance abuse, eligibility for free or reduced school lunch, and other risk indicators.

(c) Commitment to focus on and adhere to the Guiding Principles of the

one selected CYFAR Outcome.

(d) Adherence to the CYFAR Integrated Program Components Community, Technology, and Sustainability.

Community sites previously funded by CYFAR State Strengthening, New Communities, and Youth at Risk projects are not eligible to apply for CYFAR SCP funding.

Part VI: Logic Model

A Visual Picture of the Program

Program theory articulates program impact and program process. Logic models provide a visual picture of program theory. Of primary importance in developing logic models is establishing and maintaining a focus on anticipated program results rather than on activities. Logic models help program professionals, evaluators and stakeholders prioritize and focus on the elements which are essential to the program. Once the program is articulated in a logic model, program professionals and researchers are more able to identity faulty or implausible links early on.

The logic model you are asked to complete for your CYFAR Sustainable Community Project (SCP) includes five elements: 1) Identified needs and assets, 2) Desired program results (short-term and long-term), 3) Indicators (short-term and long-term), 4) Activities, and 5) Resources. These are found in the CYFAR SCP Logic Model Worksheets. This contains the Logic Model Template worksheet and the Desired Program Results worksheets to help with detailing information necessary to describe anticipated results. An Analysis column is included on the Desired Program Results worksheets that allows you to discuss how you will analyze the data that are collected.

1) Identified Needs and Assets

The first step is to identify needs and assets in the community which allow program personnel to clearly identify and understand the issues. Because this is the basis for the entire program, it is important that it be defined using accurate and valid information rather than uninformed hunches. Be sure to look at needs and assets at many levels, from the community systems such as health, education, legal, etc. to families and to children and youth. Needs and assets analysis is a systematic way of gathering information that examines needs and helps set priorities for action while also recognizing the assets that already exist in a community.

In the logic model process, the information that evaluators gather to help understand severity of a problem also assist in determining program priorities, and program results that accrue from program activities. Census data, observations, records and existing data bases, and literature reviews

are sources of existing information to identify needs and assets of targeted children, youth and families.

2) Desired Program Results

The second step in the logic model process is articulating the desired results or changes expected because of the program. This is arguably the most important aspect of a logic model because it provides the focus that all successful programs need. The question is: At the completion of the program/intervention, what will be different? Specifying expected program results is useful because it enables program professionals to assess whether their program/intervention is appropriate and perhaps what changes are necessary to insure that the program meets needs and really can be expected to lead to the desired outcomes.

For the CYFAR SCP Logic Model, programs will identify short term and long term results. All SCP projects are expected to measure a limited set of short term results and long term results and report on them through the CYFAR year end report.

Generally, changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes, are considered short term. Short term results are usually concrete and measurable; directly linked to the curricula or project activities; and can be accomplished in a specific timeframe. Behavior changes can be considered either short term or long term. Long term results must be directly linked to short term results. The program design will determine how the short and long term results are defined for CYFAR Sustainable Community Projects.

Some SCP programs will be able to measure long term results that reflect program effects that extend beyond knowledge, skills, attitude, and behavior changes. If the program design calls for community change through participant behavior, then those changes can be identified as long term results in the logic model. Examples might include:

- Changes in school climate,
- Improved neighborhood safety,
- Increased support for parents and families,
- Increased support for youth entering post secondary education.

The key is that these long term results would follow short term results through participant behavior.

The design of the selected program will determine whether a long term community result is appropriate for the CYFAR SCP Logic Model. Some CYFAR projects, such as the youth engagement projects, may not be able to articulate all of their long term results at the beginning because best practices for youth civic engagement programs dictate that program staff

work with youth collaboratively to identify critical community issues. Once participants and staff identify their specific expected community results, these can be added to the CYFAR SCP Logic Model in second or subsequent years.

Limit the Number of Expected Results
Recognizing that CYFAR programs are broad based and participant needs and interests are many, programs frequently have many components. However, it is essential to select no more than three short term results and no more than 3 long term results for this logic model. Short term results will be required on each CYFAR SCP year end report. Specify the time or times during the five years when long term results will be reported whenever a cohort completes their involvement in the program and at the end of the fifth year.

3) Indicators
Indicators flow logically from the desired program results. What shows that the results have been achieved? What is the evidence? Using appropriate program indicators, program activities and results can be measured and tracked. Indicators can be far-ranging, including results from surveys and focus groups, scores on standard measures, agency administrative data, and population data. Evaluation Work Sheets are included to help specify program indicators for each program goal.

4) Activities
Activities describe programs that are implemented to achieve the desired results. Program activities must be clearly linked to desired results. Attention to the choice of programs, research upon which it is based, population to be served and critical elements of successful programs must all be considered. Use the CYFAR Guiding Principles for the National Outcome chosen for your project, to determine appropriate activities for projects based upon the desired results.

5) Resources
Resources include the people, stakeholders, curricula, spaces, approvals, funds and any thing else needed to conduct the activities to achieve the desired results to meet the identified needs and capitalize on the available assets.

Monitoring and Evaluation

An important part of the logic model is how the intervention will be monitored and evaluated, including program implementation and intended results. Monitoring and evaluation serve to:

- Identify the initial extent of need;
- Track how the need may change over time;

- Document how well program implementation protocols are being followed;
- Mark progress toward achieving results;
- Know when results have been met;
- Discern how resource use has supported particular program efforts and subsequent results.

Part VII: Five Year Work Plan

CYFAR SCP applications will describe how the selected program model will be implemented over 5 years. The Work Plan will include tasks such as staffing, recruiting participants, recruiting volunteers, establishing key partnerships, program implementation, marketing and promotion, materials development, training staff and volunteers, etc. CYFAR projects may not have the same participants for the full five-year plan. When there are 2 or more high context cohorts planned for the five years of the project, each should be noted in the five year plan timeline

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